

Growth Mindset Interventions

Intervention Snapshot | Supporting Postsecondary Success Topic Area

WHAT WORKS CLEARINGHOUSE™
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Large numbers of students who enroll in college do not complete a degree. Yet, earning a college degree is one of the primary pathways for economic success and is increasingly required for good jobs and high wages. The way students interpret early academic struggles in college may affect whether or not they remain enrolled. If students attribute their academic challenges to a perceived lack of intelligence or inability to succeed in college, they may be less likely to persist. *Growth Mindset* interventions aim to improve college persistence and academic achievement by encouraging students to view intelligence as a “malleable” characteristic that grows with effort, and to view academic challenges as temporary setbacks that they can overcome.

This What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) report, part of the WWC’s Supporting Postsecondary Success topic area,

explores the effects of *Growth Mindset* interventions on postsecondary students’ academic achievement, college enrollment, and progressing in college. The WWC identified 15 studies of *Growth Mindset* interventions. Six of these studies meet WWC standards. The evidence presented in this report is from studies of the impact of *Growth Mindset* interventions on postsecondary students—including Black, White, Hispanic, first-generation, and Pell grant-eligible students—in both public and private postsecondary settings.

Findings on *Growth Mindset* interventions from six studies that meet WWC standards are shown below. The table reports an effectiveness rating, the improvement index, and the number of studies and students that contributed to the findings. The improvement index is a measure of the intervention’s effect on an outcome.

What Happens When Students Participate in *Growth Mindset* Interventions?

The WWC found that implementing <i>Growth Mindset</i> interventions:	Effectiveness rating	Study findings	Evidence meeting WWC standards (version 4.0)	
		Improvement index (percentile points)	Number of studies	Number of students
May increase academic achievement	Potentially positive effects	+13	5	5,301
May result in little or no change in college enrollment	No discernible effects	+1	2	8,194
May result in little or no change in progressing in college	No discernible effects	-2	3	8,351

Note: The improvement index can be interpreted as the expected change in percentile rank for an average comparison group student if that student had received the intervention. A positive or negative improvement index does not necessarily mean the estimated effect is statistically significant.

FINDINGS ARE BASED ON:

6 studies with 9,140 students in 6 postsecondary institutions in California, Indiana, Maryland, Michigan, Oregon, and Texas



STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS:

Pell grant eligible: 26%	Gender: 55% female	Race: 14% minority	Ethnicity: 13% Hispanic
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What Do *Growth Mindset* Interventions Cost?

Costs of implementing *Growth Mindset* interventions include time for college personnel to prepare and deliver intervention materials to students. *Growth Mindset* interventions may require the use of existing campus facilities, or they may be delivered online via computer

in a location of each student’s choosing. Online delivery may incur costs in the form of information technology infrastructure and software. Postsecondary institutions can access existing intervention materials for free online at sites such as those listed below. Alternatively, college personnel can adapt intervention materials described in the studies reviewed in the Intervention Report linked below.

LEARN MORE



Read more about *Growth Mindset* interventions and the studies summarized here in the [Intervention Report](#). The following websites provide additional information on implementing *Growth Mindset* interventions: <https://www.perts.net/orientation/cg> and <https://www.mindsetkit.org>.